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RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE
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RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 1429
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY PRIORITY 1022
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 1211
RUEHNZ/AMCONSUL AUCKLAND PRIORITY 0239
RUEHDN/AMCONSUL SYDNEY PRIORITY 0644

C O N F I D E N T I A L SUVA 000546

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/07/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [KPAO](#) [FJ](#)
SUBJECT: BAINIMARAMA'S COUP ATTEMPT IN FIJI: STILL NOT
RESOLVED

REF: SUVA 543 (AND PREVIOUS)

Classified By: Amb. Dinger. Sec. 1.4 (B,D).

¶1. (C) We have seen press guidance and a discussion paper for a sub-PCC that suggest Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) Commander Bainimarama "has conclusively deposed the lawfully elected government and conducted a coup." We do not believe that statement is correct, as yet, and we have asked PA to attempt to withdraw the press guidance for further consideration. We are told Fiji did not arise in the Dec. 6 State Department press briefing.

¶2. (C) Per reftels, Bainimarama has certainly attempted to depose the Qarase Government. No doubt about that. And the military currently has control of the streets in Suva because it has the firearms. On the other hand, per reftel, PM Qarase has not resigned; President Iloilo has stated he remains in office; and Bainimarama has admitted publicly that he is meeting resistance from senior civil servants, from the police, and from Fiji's Great Council of Chiefs. Our sources confirm that to be the case (reftel). NGOs, churches, and others are speaking publicly against Bainimarama's effort. Qarase and his backers are certainly discussing "Fijian" ways to convince the RFMF leadership to back down.

¶3. (C) With all that going on, we believe it wrong to state definitively in public that Bainimarama has won the day. To put the U.S. on record acknowledging Bainimarama has won might encourage him and it could discourage those who disagree with Bainimarama's actions, are working to frustrate them, and are striving to re-solidify the lawful government in Fiji. Note: Our understanding from our Aussie colleagues in Suva is that FM Downer has stayed ambiguous, including by saying publicly that Bainimarama "claims that he has dismissed" the Government.

¶4. (C) All that said, we fully endorse the sub-PCC effort to establish what the USG should do definitively if/when Bainimarama does clearly consolidate control. We will provide some comment on possibilities for that separately. In the meantime, we believe the USG public message should remain that Fiji is experiencing an attempted coup and the USG has suspended our assistance to Fiji pending further developments.
DINGER